

Gratitude for our Human Family - Adults

This guide contains many resources. We recognize that every community's needs are different, so feel free to pick and choose what works best for you.

Key goals and ideas

We are part of a larger society across time and space which has provided us with many gifts.

If we better understand our society as a whole, we can see how our choices ripple out into the world.

We are called especially to see through the eyes of the disenfranchised, as well as those who have been labeled as the enemy.

Preparation

Discern which (if not all) of the readings and quotes you want to use.

Choose queries to ask and plan for how you will use them (possibilities are explored [here](#)).

Introduction

Many people make up our human family and institutions. Some we interact with directly and many more indirectly. Like a puzzle, there are many pieces, some close and some far from each other. But they are all connected. Even that piece you'd set aside not knowing where it goes has its place, and fits well there.

When we look at one puzzle piece, it can give us an indication of where it lives and how it connects and fits together with other pieces. As human beings we are not so different. Only by looking at the whole puzzle does each piece gain coherence.

Thinking of oneself as a puzzle piece, how often in your day to day life do you come across a trace of someone who might be on the other side of the puzzle (or globe)? Where did the ingredients from your last meal come from, the people who farmed them, the long supply chains of the electronics and vehicles and other materials you interact with every day?

We only have a limited view of the whole from our own perspective. To see our society in greater clarity, we need to work to see from other perspectives too. Right Sharing of World Resources practices this by engaging in relationships with people in different countries.

Every piece matters for completing the whole picture. What do we gain by having a fuller awareness of our intertwined lives?

Readings and Quaker Quotes

“For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Matthew 25:42-46

“To pass through a series of hardships and to languish under oppression brings people to a certain knowledge of these things. To enforce the duty of tenderness to the poor, the inspired Lawgiver referred the children of Israel to their own past experience: “Ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” [Ex. 23:9]. He who hath been a stranger amongst unkind people or under their government who were hard-hearted, knows how it feels; but a person who hath never felt the weight of misapplied power comes not to this knowledge but by an inward tenderness, in which the heart is prepared to sympathy with others.”

John Woolman, [A Plea for the Poor](#), page 3

"How we view the world depends on where we stand. If we stand with the wealthy, we will contemplate the world from the heights of privilege and domination. If, however, we stand with those who are poor and marginalized, oppressed and persecuted, then we shall contemplate the world from the experience of suffering and injustice. From this bottom-up perspective, we have a better chance of glimpsing the world as God does.”

John Dear, [Living Peace](#), page 127

“God is already there. As Friends, we participate in what God is doing. We don’t claim that we are bringing God to a godless place or an “unreached” people. God is already at work in every place and already has a relationship with every people group. We are invited to join in and participate in God’s mission as witnesses to God’s love.”

Eden Grace, [Good News to the Oppressed](#)

“How can we love God, whom we have not seen, if we cannot, in time of crisis, find the way to love our brothers whom we have seen?”

Bayard Rustin, [In Apprehension How Like a God!](#)

Queries - Choose whichever are appropriate for you, a mix of queries that approach the range of human experience (emotional, intellectual, personal stories) often work best

Ancestors and our Inheritance

What is a person, or a group of people, who came before us that we are thankful for?
What did they do and how have you benefited from their work?

What does being a good ancestor mean to you in the present moment? What actions have you taken that you can see its effects rippling out to future generations? What is an action you’d like to take, and what kind of support would help you to take that action?

What’s an inheritance you’ve received that you would not like to pass on to future generations? How has it affected your life and what steps can you take to not pass it on?

What values would you bring to bear on the transfer of wealth across generations?

Institutions

What’s an institution (cultural, political, economic, legal, educational, media, etc.) that you are grateful for? Share a story of where this appreciation comes from.

For that institution you are grateful for, what kinds of actions helped it to become how it is today? What’s an action you can take to support it?

Seeing through Another's Eyes

Share a time when you felt like you were a stranger. What happened and was there anything anyone did that made you feel welcome?

When you think of the “enemy,” who comes to mind? What feelings come up when you think of them? How would you like to relate to those feelings?

Who do you see as disenfranchised in your society? Short of being them, what are steps you could take to better understand their perspective?

Suggested practice for the next week:

In gratitude for the next generation, reflect on the gifts of someone younger than you. Affirm them in person or send them a note doing so.